

**§ 143-214.25A. Riparian Buffer Protection Program: Surface Water Identification Training and Certification Program.**

(a) The Division of Water Resources of the Department shall develop a program to train and certify individuals to determine the presence of surface waters that would require the application of rules adopted by the Commission for the protection of riparian buffers. The Division may train and certify employees of the Division as determined by the Director of the Division of Water Resources; employees of units of local government to whom responsibility for the implementation and enforcement of the riparian buffer protection rules is delegated pursuant to G.S. 143-214.23; and Registered Foresters under Chapter 89B of the General Statutes who are employees of the North Carolina Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services as determined by the Assistant Commissioner of the North Carolina Forest Service. The Director of the Division of Water Resources may review the determinations made by individuals who are certified pursuant to this section, may override a determination made by an individual certified under this section, and, if the Director of the Division of Water Resources determines that an individual is failing to make correct determinations, revoke the certification of that individual.

(b) The Division of Water Resources shall develop standard forms for use in making and reporting determinations. Each individual who is certified to make determinations under this section shall prepare a written report of each determination and shall submit the report to the agency that employs the individual. Each agency shall maintain reports of determinations made by its employees, shall forward a copy of each report to the Director of the Division of Water Resources, and shall maintain these reports and all other records related to determinations so that they will be readily accessible to the public.

(c) In implementing the Surface Water Identification Training and Certification Program established by this section, the Division of Water Resources of the Department of Environmental Quality shall give priority to training and certifying the most highly qualified and experienced personnel in each agency. The Division of Water Resources shall evaluate the effectiveness of the Surface Water Identification Training and Certification Program and shall submit an annual report of its findings and recommendations, if any, to the Environmental Review Commission on or before October 1 of each year. (2010-180, s. 4(a), (b); 2011-145, s. 13.25(uu); 2013-155, s. 22; 2013-413, s. 57(k), (cc); 2014-115, s. 17; 2015-241, s. 14.30(u).)